

# Several ICI chemical plants may close in rationalization plan

By Peter Hill

Imperial Chemical Industries is planning to rationalize production in its organics division during the next 10 years, resulting in plant closures and job losses which could amount to 500 annually.

Confirmation of the rationalization plans was given by ICI last night after disclosures by a union leader. It coincided with official approval for ICI and BP to progress with plans to build a 155-mile pipeline linking their joint £100m ethylene plant on Teesside with the BP complex at Grangemouth.

According to Mr Roger Ward, national secretary of the ICI staff section of the Association of Scientific, Technical, and Managerial Staffs, ICI had taken decisions on the rationalization programme and it was to be implemented shortly.

A spokesman for the group denied that any immediate works closures were planned, but said that long-term thinking about the pattern of manufacturing in the organics division was being discussed with staff representatives.

The document on which Mr Ward had based his statement, the spokesman explained, had formed a basis for these discussions at a meeting of the organics joint consultative committee.

"We envisage a rationalization of manufacturing facilities over the next 10 years resulting in an overall growth of organics division capacity. Although this could result in the closure of manufacturing plants at a number of division sites, the plans and timing have still to be resolved", he said.

The spokesman said that before plans were implemented, staff affected would be fully consulted.

Mr Ward said that only four of the 10 plants in the organics division were assured of a long-term future. These were Huddersfield, Stevenston in Ayrshire and Burn Hall near Manchester, while a £6m investment at Grangemouth was based on continuing rationalization. He said closures of sites at Derby, Dumfries and Blackley, near Manchester, were expected within eight years.

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